



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

GROUND WATER AWARENESS WEEK

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Underground Injection Control

BISMARCK, N.D. – In the ongoing effort to preserve and protect ground water, strict regulations control the disposal of substances that, unregulated, could affect drinking water in the United States.

March 13 through 19 has been designated National Ground Water Awareness Week. In North Dakota, protecting ground water is one of the primary functions of the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Water Quality. Ground water is found between soil particles and cracks in rocks underground, in formations known as aquifers.

The average American uses 100 gallons of water per day, according to figures from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It is also estimated that 75 percent of the water that comes into our homes goes down the drain again.

It's no surprise then, that Americans generate large quantities of waste fluids. Where does it go? According to the EPA, more than 750 billion gallons of hazardous and non-hazardous liquids are disposed of safely through underground injection. While that may seem uncomfortably close to the ground water on which half of all Americans directly depend, the Underground Injection Control (UIC) program ensures that these waste liquids are disposed of safely.

Protecting ground water, and by extension, drinking water, is a collaborative effort. At the federal level is the EPA, while the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Water Quality is responsible at the state level. An important forum for federal and state regulators, as well as industry leaders, is the Ground Water Protection Council (GWPC). The GWPC promotes the protection and conservation of ground water resources for all beneficial uses, recognizing ground water as a critical component of the ecosystem.

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The organization was originally formed in 1983 to serve as a forum for technical and regulatory experts to discuss UIC issues. GWPC has evolved to a broader focus on ground water protection and conservation issues.

Through this multi-level forum and partnership, this crucial natural resource is safeguarded for the present, and for future generations.

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